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A LESSON

FOR

KINGS;

OR,

The Art of Loofing a Kingdom,

&c.



A LESSON
FOR
KINGS;
OR,
The Art of Loosing a Kingdom:
EXEMPLIFIED IN
THE CASE AND CONDUCT
OF
REHOBAM, KING OF ISRAEL;

A SERMON.

First of KINGS, 12th Chapter, 15th Verse :

“ WHEREFORE THE KING HEARKENED NOT UNTO
“ THE PEOPLE, FOR THE CAUSE WAS FROM
“ THE LORD !”

“ King is a name too proud for man to wear
“ With modesty and meekness ; and the crown,
“ So dazzling in their eyes who set it on,
“ Is sure t’ intoxicate the brows it binds.”

Cowper.

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PREFACE.

IT has generally been the practice of those persons, who from ignorance or interest have become the advocates of a bad cause, to stigmatize, with opprobrious epithets, all those whose sentiments have differed from their own: and though the epithets thus given will weigh but little in the estimation of intelligent men, and can *prove nothing* in favor of the cause they are intended to serve, unless it be the *want of proof*, yet they have generally, for a time, the effect of *misleading the vulgar*, who are in the habit of attending more to *sound* than *sense*.

On this ground, the partizans of the present ministry have found the terms Jacobin, Democrat, &c. a most convenient succedaneum both for argument and fact; and they have accordingly bestowed them very plentifully, not only on the *enemies* of government, but even on those of its *friends*, who have been compelled, from motives of *prudence*, of *justice*, and of *humanity*, to condemn an infatuated perseverance in a war, which will be marked, in the page of future history, as one of the most disgraceful that ever nation entered into.

The same misfortune (if a misfortune it be) has happened to those who, concluding from the present appearances of things, and from their knowledge of the history
of

of mankind, that a reform, or revolution, will in time take place, have wished for the former rather than the latter.

Now as these dealers in illiberal epithets will most likely have the sagacity to discover, that the author of the following pages is a *friend to reform*, and an *enemy to the present war*; and that he is moreover no very passionate admirer of *folly* or *injustice*, even when they appear as *appendages to royalty* itself, they will most probably enroll him in *their* list of *Jacobins*; by which term is *supposed* to be meant an enemy to the present government (and indeed to government in general) and a friend to all the disorders and cruelties exercised by the different parties in France.

To

To these worthy gentlemen the author has only to reply (leaving them to attach what degree of credit they think proper to his assertions) that if the above definition of a Jacobin is a just one, he is so far from acknowledging the truth of the charge, that he conceives himself authorised to retort on his adversaries, by alleging, that those are the *real* Jacobins, the *real enemies* of government, who, by doing all they can to render it *oppressive* to the *people*, and treating with contempt every *peaceable* attempt at *reformation*, are in *reality* (whatever they may boast of) taking the most effectual methods that human wisdom can devise, to bring about a revolution. And on the other hand, those are the *true friends* of any government, who, by the *removal* of *grievances*, *justly obnoxious*,

noxious, and *long complained* of, would gladly support its tottering fabric, by the general *approbation* and *affection* of the *people*.

As to the disorders that have taken place in France, every one possessed of humanity must be shocked at them;* while
those

* It might however be naturally expected, that those who affect to be so much shocked at the sanguinary acts of the French convention, would discover something like *consistency*, that the treachery or cruelty of a *monarch*, for instance, would pain them as much as the treachery or cruelty of a *convention*; that if they really lamented the disorders of France, they would not join with those who fomented them; that if they were shocked at the recollection of the *blood* that has been *shed* by the *friends* of the *revolution*, they would be still more so at the *greater torrents* which have been shed by its *enemies*, in the vain hope of effecting a *counter one*;
and

those who are willing to trace things to their proper *source*, will execrate the conduct of those foreign powers, whose unjust interference, by giving rise to those disorders, has, for a time, obscured the dawn of freedom's proudest day.

To those who, instead of being misled by names, have the candour and good sense to judge from facts, the author begs leave
to

and be less eager in seizing every shadow of pretext for the continuation of a war *bloody beyond example*;—in a word, that those who urge the cruelty and treachery of France, as a *pretext* for the continuance of the war, would turn their eyes to the fate of wretched Poland, and laying their hands on their hearts, ask themselves whether the national convention of France, *has produced, or can produce*, any more *cruel*, or more *treacherous*, or with *less excuse* for being so, than those with whom we are now
“ maintaining the accustomed relations of *peace* and
“ *amity* ? ”

to present his assurances, that he is no enemy to kingly government as such, and only laments the abuses too frequently attendant on it. He has for many years been well known in a small circle of friends, as a friend to the English constitution, to the person of the reigning monarch, and a warm admirer of the abilities and supposed integrity of the minister. He could not however contemplate, without astonishment, the commencement of a war, which appeared to him to be repugnant to every principle of *justice* and *policy*; the unaccountable continuance of this lamentable contest; the opposition to every attempt at *reform*; and other attendant circumstances, has only served to increase his astonishment, till reviewing the conduct of governments in *former times*,
 he

he has at length found, that it is no novel circumstance for persons, whom the Almighty has given up to infatuation, to act in direct opposition both to their *own* interests, and to the interests of the *people*.

With these views, he presents the following sermon to the consideration of his countrymen, leaving them to determine, whether or not there is any similarity between the conduct of the ministers of Rehoboam, and that of the ministers of any other country.

A
LESSON FOR KINGS;
OR,
THE ART OF LOOSING A KINGDOM;

A SERMON.

First of KINGS, 12th Chapter, 15th Verse :

“ WHEREFORE THE KING HEARKENED NOT UNTO
“ THE PEOPLE, FOR THE CAUSE WAS FROM
“ THE LORD !”

THE occasion of these words, we may learn by consulting the preceding verses, in which we are informed, that on the death of king Solomon, Rehoboam his son went to Shechem, whither all Israel were come to make him king. Four hundred and seventy-six years had now elapsed since the people of Israel had been a distinct people, and dwelt in their own land:

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during

during the first three hundred and fifty-six years, they had been governed by Judges, whom the Almighty had raised up, as the representatives of himself, among them ; to whom therefore they *owed*, and generally *paid*, implicit obedience : but at the expiration of that time, they had thought proper to avail themselves of some abuses, which, during Samuel's old age, had crept into their government ; to change entirely the form of that government ; or, as we should say in modern language, to effect a *revolution*. On this occasion Samuel was commanded by God to represent to them, not only the sin they had committed in virtually rejecting the Lord, who was their king, but likewise to set before them (in terms not very favorable to that form of government) the evils that must necessarily result to themselves from such a conduct ; and the oppression they must unavoidably feel under the species of government they had chosen :----first of
Samuel,

Samuel, chap. viii. xi. and xviii. But all remonstrance seeming in vain, Samuel at length anointed a king over them: but alas! scarcely had they seen, or rather *felt*, the reign of three kings, e'er they began also to see and feel as God had forewarned them, that national happiness was not necessarily attached to kingly government.

Having found that kings were capable of abusing the power vested in them, to the oppression of their subjects, they now thought of a new expedient, *viz.* to bind the king by a solemn promise, made in the presence of all the people; or, as we should say, to administer a *coronation oath*.

Whether they were so *wicked* as to suppose, that in a compact between the king and people, his majesty is as much bound to fulfill *his* engagements, as the

people are *theirs*; or whether they thought it sufficient for the king to make a promise, without ever intending to keep it; what kind of politicians they were in this respect, it is difficult, at a period so distant as the present, to say: perhaps, having no such instance before their eyes, as a king breaking his word, they did not look forward to that event: be that as it may, all the congregation of Israel came with Jeroboam at their head, and presented to the intended monarch a petition, or remonstrance (I hardly know which to call it) couched in the following terms:—"thy
 " father made our *yoke grievous*; now,
 " therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his *heavy yoke*
 " which he put upon us, *lighter*, and we
 " will serve thee."

Jeroboam, convinced that the matter was likely to prove of some importance, very wisely declined giving an immediate answer,

answer, and desired three days to consider their demands. In the mean time, he had recourse first to the old counsellors of Solomon, his father ; but their advice not suiting his ideas, and perhaps not exactly according with his *royal feelings*, he resorted (as other kings have done) to the *young men* of his court, from whom he was sure of advice, which if not more *prudent*, would at least be more *palatable* ; and meeting from them with the very advice he wished for, the young monarch found no difficulty in acceding to it ; and accordingly, when the third day came, he positively refused to comply with the peoples request, and gave them such an answer as his *young counsellors* had dictated ; wherefore, says my text, “ the king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause “ was from the Lord.”

From the subject thus introduced, we may, in the first place, consider the circumstances

cumstances of the *people*, and the nature and ground of their application to the throne.

Secondly,---the conduct of the *king* of Israel, on this occasion.

And, Thirdly,---the reason assigned for the whole in the latter part of my text, namely, “ *The cause was from the Lord.*”

With respect to the situation of the people, it will be difficult to obtain an *accurate* idea of it, or to state with precision *all*, or even *many* of the grievances under which they groaned, as no accounts of their *parliamentary debates* (if ever they took place) have reached us, we cannot from them ascertain what were the crimes of their ministers, or the abuses of their government; and, as a court kalendar (that greatest of all libels on an English government) either was not published in the days
of

of Solomon, or has not been handed down to us, we are deprived of its assistance in discovering with how many shamefully *useless* and *expensive* offices the people were burthened; offices which, while they *increase* the *burthens* of the people, and deprive even the poorest of a portion of their hard-earned bread, do in the same proportion *diminish*, by an increase of crown influence, their means even of lawful resistance.

With how many worse than useless creations of this kind the kingdom of Israel was disgraced, it is impossible for us at this distance of time to say; for as to the twelve thousand horsemen, and fourteen hundred chariots, which we read of, chap. x. verse 26, the Israelites might perhaps be persuaded to believe them as necessary to the *defence* of the *kingdom*, as they were for the *state* of the *king*, just as the good people of England, after having for many

years considered the maintenance of a standing army as an oppressive and unconstitutional measure, have of late found out (or their rulers have found out for them) that their sea-walled island is not safe without it.

That Solomon, however, had lived in considerable state, is sufficiently evident, from the account we have of his extravagant provision for one single day; and the description given us of the magnificence of his throne, &c. And it is moreover as evident, that while himself was indulging in all this state, surrounded by his concubines, he had treated his *subjects* as little better than slaves, employing many thousands of them in hewing wood in the mountains, thousands more in carrying burthens, &c. just with the same sort of propriety that other kings *formerly* have sent *their* subjects into foreign countries,

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to be slaughtered by thousands, in a quarrel that did not at all concern *them*.

It is possible, that besides those grievances which we are acquainted with, some others might exist that we are not informed of; it is possible that something like a mock representation of the people might have existed among them; they might have thought themselves rather *injured* than *represented*, and might have petitioned for a *reform*; Solomon (as is sometimes the case with kings) might have treated all their *peaceable* applications with contempt; their *habeus corpus* act, if such they had, might possibly have been wantonly suspended, during which time his two secretaries of state (Elioreph and Ahiah) might have apprehended some of them who, might afterwards, at the instigation of Jehosaphat, Solomon's *attorney-general*, have been tried for their lives; the
people

people might have been still more provoked by the dissipation of *Solomon's sons* ; nay, it is more than probable, that his *eldest* son, Rehoboam, whose conduct we are shortly to consider, and who appears by his actions to have been a very thoughtless and headstrong youth, might, during the life-time of Solomon, have contracted enormous debts, and the people might have been (in violation of assurances that ought to have been sacred) called upon *more than once* to bear the burthen of them :--- though justice compels us here to remark, that if even this happened in Israel, the people were *comparatively* able to bear it, as they were not impoverished by *unjust* and *unnecessary* wars, much less did the ministers of Solomon persevere in those which experience had taught them, or ought to have taught them, were as *hopeless* as they were *unjust* !-----No, the reign of Solomon was a peaceful reign ! his
ministers

ministers were at least wise enough to avoid meddling with the concerns of their neighbours, and did not waste the blood and treasure of Israel in their quarrels.*

But

* Wretched indeed must be the situation of that people, who groan under the accumulated weight of *every* species of oppression, that the history of nations can furnish us with: such an instance as this is perhaps no where to be found. But does it follow, as some would teach us, that a people have no right to complain, because they have *some* advantages which some others have been deprived of? It will afford but slender consolation, for instance, to one who has been deprived of his liberty, and immured within the walls of a prison, till his health, perhaps, is destroyed, and himself and family completely ruined, and all this under a charge of which he is at last proved to be innocent, to be told, that in some countries, persons as innocent as himself have been deprived *even of life*. As little comfort will it yield a man, who, after bringing home the hard-earned reward of his labours, which he would gladly expend in purchasing (perhaps at an exorbitant price) the necessaries of life for a numerous family, finds himself compelled to contribute the far greater part of it to support the splendor and luxury of his oppressors, to be at last informed, that if he remains quiet, and does not disturb the happy government under which he enjoys *so many blessings*, he will be left in peaceable possession of the remaining pittance.

But notwithstanding this and some other advantages, which the people of Israel enjoyed, they still laboured under a “grievous service,” and a “heavy yoke;” they had long borne it with patience, as dutiful subjects, attached to a prince that was not altogether destitute of good qualities: they seem unwilling to disturb the reign of Solomon by any acts of violence; and if they applied to him at all for a redress of grievances, it was certainly in a peaceable way.

But the history of the world amply proves, that no people, how abject soever, will always bear oppression; popular vengeance may be lulled asleep for a time, but like the stone, which contrary to its nature is impelled upwards, the longer it is in falling, the heavier it will fall at last.

The death of Solomon seemed to present to the Israelites a favorable opportunity

nity for the recovery of at least a portion of their liberty, and they were determined not to let it slip.

It does not however, appear, that the body of the people had any thing like an intention to revolt. There is indeed no doubt but the sycophants of the court would represent, or rather *misrepresent* their intention as highly seditious ; and it is likewise at the same time more than probable, that Jeroboam, and some other *individuals*, either to gratify their own ambition, or from personal enmity against the king, might endeavour to incense the people, by representing the bad conduct of the king, or his ministers, in a more unfavorable light than it really deserved. Such persons there are in every country, who, by taking advantage of the existence of *real* evils, very frequently lead well-meaning and moderate men to much greater lengths than they originally intended

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to go, on which account every real friend of his country will the more lament the wretched policy of that government, who, by suffering the existence of notorious grievances, are in fact strengthening the efforts, and putting as it were a sword into the hands of the only *real* enemies of *good* government.

But to return from this digression; though the people of Israel might be calumniated by courtiers; or, though the integrity and good intentions of *some individuals* among them might admit of more than a doubt, yet nothing like sedition could possibly be charged on the body of the people; on the contrary, the *strength* of their *claim* seems to admit of increase from the *propriety* of their *conduct*.

A modern attorney, or solicitor-general, might indeed discover something like *constructive* treason in this humble attempt
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to alter the government as by *custom* established, and in his ridiculous phraseology, might have termed it “ a compassing and “ imagining the death of the king ;” but so far were they in *reality* from any such *compassing* and *imagining*, that they had actually assembled, as we are informed, at Shechem, to anoint this same Rehoboam, king over them. Nor does it appear that any methods were made use of to intimidate the king ; or that they came armed, (like the barons to king John)* into his presence ;

* By the bye, it is very difficult to reconcile the respect paid to *Magna Charta*, with the late doctrine of high treason, as *laid down* by a *learned judge*, and followed by all the *crown lawyers* ; for if any attempt to overawe, even the lowest branch of the legislature, and suspend its functions, though but for “ a moment ;”—if an attempt to alter the government in this way be really a compassing and imagining the death of the king, and consequently high treason, who will venture to say that our Barons, at Runny-Mead, had no intention of overawing the government, or “ suspending its functions,” even “ for a “ moment ?” And if they had, ought not that which was the fruit of their treason (according to the *above doctrine*) to be rather abhorred than respected ? Or does it
all

presence ; or that any of the spies of the court had discovered so much as a *pike*, or even a *pocket knife*, among them ; nay, so modest were their demands, that they did not extend to a *total* emancipation from their bondage ; so far were they from desiring to shake off “ the yoke,” that they only desired of their intended king, that he would ease them of *part* of their burthens, and make the yoke “ *lighter* :” they had perhaps learned, that in Judea, kingly government was not compatible with the entire freedom of the subject ; and like wise men and real friends to their country, if some of the most obnoxious of their grievances had been redressed, would have submitted to have borne the
rest

all come to this at last, *viz.* that a weak, and consequently *unsuccessful* attempt, made by the people to recover their right, is treasonable ; but a vigorous and *successful* one highly laudable ? This is certainly one way, and perhaps the only one, of reconciling such kind of contradiction.

rest, rather than convulse the kingdom by a revolution.

Let us now, in the second place, consider the conduct of king Rehoboam, on this occasion.

Reasoning from the nature and propriety of things, and forgetting, for a moment, what too often has been, and it is possible again may be, the conduct of kings in similar circumstances, one should have thought, that one of the first things that would have struck him, would have been the reasonableness of the people's demands, which he would have felt enhanced, by the propriety of their conduct: or if it were possible for that to escape him, it might at least have been expected, that, alive to his own interest, he could not have been blind to the policy of consenting, with as good a grace as possible, to

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demands

demands which he was not in a condition to resist: but alas! such has generally been the infatuation of kings, and so dreadfully fearful are they *in general*,* that the people should recover any part of their own, that instances of their *giving* what they have *thought* themselves in a condition to *with-hold*, are rare indeed; and hence, when grievances are complained of, and known to exist, instead of generously coming forward, and meeting their subjects half way, in the great work of reform, which would tend to establish their thrones more firmly than all the severities they can use,

* I have said, *in general*,—God forbid we should harbour an idea,—that monarchs are necessarily tyrants; for, not to mention the illustrious instance on the British throne, the conduct of the unhappy king of Poland furnishes us with an instance to the contrary: but alas! we behold, at the same time, in his unmerited fate, a glaring proof of the truth of the general remark; and that there are existing wretches, who, not satisfied with tyrannizing over their *own* subjects, are enemies to the liberties of *other* countries, and even to kings themselves, when favorable to liberty.

use, or all the armies they can raise, they too often persevere in their refusal, till finding they can refuse no longer, their concessions come too late, either to *satisfy* their *subjects*, or to do *them* any good. Instances of this kind are to be met with in the history of most countries, and are not wanting in that of our own.

It is plain, however, that no convictions of the *justice* of the people's claims, or the *policy* of granting them, could force their way into the head of Rehoboam; but that he might avoid any appearance of rashness, after desiring time to consider the matter, he affected to ask the advice of his counsellors, though his subsequent conduct sufficiently evinced, that, like many others, he had previously determined to follow his *own*, vainly supposing, that all intelligent men must see things in the

light in which he saw them. He had first recourse to "the *old men*, that stood before "Solomon, his father;" that is, in modern language, the *privy council*.

As Solomon was a wise man, there is no doubt but he had selected some of the wisest of his subjects to be his counsellors; and as they were now "*old men*," they had added *experience*, the surest of all guides, to their wisdom; and yet with these qualifications, they seem to have inherited the true spirit of courtiers; that is to say, they regarded what they *considered* as the *interests* of the *king*, but were not much concerned about those of the *people*; a species of excellence which indeed must very seldom be looked for in those who surround a throne.

These wise old men, therefore, either did not *see*, or did not *feel*, or did not dare

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to urge, before their master, the *justice* of the popular cause : they nevertheless gave him counsel, which, had it been followed, might have secured his crown.

They saw clearly that it was policy to *feign*, at least, submission to a people he could not resist. They were convinced, that the people of Israel might be easily *soothed* into compliances, to which it would be dangerous to attempt *forcing* them ; or in vulgar language, that they might be *led*, but could not be *driven* : * they therefore advised him to put, as we should say, a good face on the matter ; or, in other words, to make a virtue of necessity, assuring him [verse 7th] that a temporary sub-

* It may be proper just to remind those whom it may concern, that a disposition of this kind is not peculiar to Judea ; it has appeared in America ; it has likewise appeared, and may possibly again be seen in Ireland ; and perhaps something not unlike it may be discovered even in England.

submission on his part, and a few good words, would secure the people for ever.

Happy had it been for Rehoboam if he had followed this advice ; but his *royal breast* could not brook the idea of any thing that resembled even a temporary submission to a people, whose bread he and his family, for many years, had eaten : his *royal blood** flowed with increasing rapidity
through

* Some may suppose, that the phrase *royal blood* is a meer expletive, a word without any meaning, and that the blood, &c. of kings and nobles does not greatly differ from that of other men ; but this is a vulgar idea ;—it is well known to the learned, and especially to anatomists, that *royal blood* is very different from common ditto ; it is much brighter in colour, owing to its purity ; the venal blood of kings far exceeding, in that particular, even the arterial blood of other men : it is not debased by a mixture, with what the learned call *serum*, that is to say, salt and water ; the *crasamentum* being so contrived as to flow freely without its assistance. A *royal heart* is more capacious than a common one, and is not so liable to be contracted, except indeed when prerogative is in danger, when its forcible contraction becomes necessary, in order to propel the blood with rapidity through
the

through his *veins*, and communicating its warmth to the upper regions of the *scull*, his imagination became fired with ideas of royal dignity, such as have been known to fill the heads of kings on such occasions; and conceiving, as others have done after him, that he was in full and unquestionable possession of a *divine right*, to do *wrong*, he rejected, with true royal dignity, the counsel of the old men, that he might follow his own.

It seems however, that in Judea, as well as in other countries, besides the privy council, of which I take *old men* to have

the arteries. The *royal* head differs likewise from that of common subjects, it contains a much greater quantity of brain, owing to the extra thinness of the *scull*, which would, on that account, be frequently in danger of becoming cracked, were it not particularly firm, and indeed almost impenetrable in its texture.

[See Spigelius, Diemerboock, Dr. Willesius, M. Malpighii, Lower's *Traëtatus de Corde*, H. Ridley, &c. &c. &c.]

been, there was also a cabinet council, a *junto* of persons, chosen on account of certain qualities which kings usually delight in, and without which no one can ever hope to be acceptable at court: it is true, they were *young men*, and therefore destitute of that *experience* which is indispensably necessary, in order to conduct with success the affairs of a great nation; but they possessed, what to some persons appears of infinitely greater consequence, a pliant disposition, and were sure to give such advice as would please the king.

To this *junto* of *unexperienced young men*, Rehoboam resorted; and that he might not seem to act alone, pretended to ask advice of *them*, while they, on their parts, knowing what kind of conduct he was determined to pursue, readily gave him such advice as they knew would be agreeable to him, namely, to *disregard*
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the *voice of the people*, and refuse their just demands.

To give some plausibility to their advice, so directly opposite to that of older and more experienced men, they no doubt suggested that the fears of the old men were groundless, and that to listen to them would be unworthy the dignity of a great king ; that the majority of the people were sensible of the advantages they had enjoyed under the princes of the house of David ; and though a few might pretend they were oppressed, both by the avaricious disposition of Solomon, and by the *prodigality* ; or (as the Wedderburns of that day might term it) the *necessary splendor* and *liberality* of himself, yet these were only a few *Democrats* and *Jacobins*, who were unworthy of the least attention : that moreover, under the pretence of reform, they concealed the darkest designs against the
state ;

state ; that if they were successful in this application, they would only be emboldened to ask the more, till at length the king would not have a single farthing-worth of prerogative left : that the best way to prevent this train of evils, would be to nip their designs in the bud ; and that, by making examples of a few of their leaders, he would frighten all the rest : or should their numbers be much greater than was supposed, yet he had nothing to dread from their resentment, as he had an army of one hundred and forty thousand “ chosen men, which were warriors ;” or, as we should say, *disciplined troops*, which, under any pretext, might easily be called out : these, together with the alliances he might make with the kings of Egypt, Assyria, and other neighbouring despots, would be amply sufficient, and leave him nothing to fear from his people.

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These and the like suggestions, with which the heads of weak monarchs are always filled by wicked ministers, easily prevailed on Rehoboam to do what before he wished to do ; and accordingly, on the day appointed, he came to parliament, and made the following MOST GRACIOUS SPEECH :

“ My father made your yoke *heavy*, and
 “ I will *add* to your yoke ; my father also
 “ chastised you with *whips*, but I will
 “ chastise you with *scorpions* !”

Charming prince ! magnanimous hero !
 now worthy of thyself ! how worthy a
 successor of the wisest of kings ! well might
 the whole herd of courtiers bend their
 pliant necks beneath such exalted wisdom,
 such consummate goodness !

Whether an address was moved for by
 any of the court party, in answer to this
most

*most gracious** speech, we are not informed ; but it is certain, that the motion for an immediate *adjournment* was carried by a large *majority*, if not *mem. con.*

The matter was now at issue between the king and people ; and the latter finding that all hopes of success, from *peaceable* applications to the throne, were in vain ; that their heavy burthens, instead of being *diminished*, were like to be much *increased* ; and that they had now nothing but force to trust to, resolved to have recourse to arms ; and “ to your tents, O “ Israel ! ” was echoed from every quarter.

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* We call this speech a *most gracious* one, because coming from a king it must of necessity be so ; hence all speeches delivered *by kings*, and all messages *from them*, are, without any regard to their contents, stiled *most gracious* ; and hence also, if even a tyrant, or an infidel, were to fill the British throne, the ministers of the Church of England must affront the Almighty to his face ; and in praying for the parliament, call the reigning monarch a *most religious and gracious king !!!*

We learn from the sequel of this history, that Rehoboam made some ineffectual attempts to recover his authority : he sent Adoram, his chief tax-gatherer, to the people ; but the incensed Israelites stoned him to death, and Rehoboam dreading a similar fate, was glad to escape as speedily as possible ; or, in the language of holy writ, “ he made speed to get him up to “ his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.”

Thus “ the king hearkened not unto “ the people ;” and the consequence was, the kingdom of Israel, which he had vainly hoped by violence to secure, was lost to him and his family for ever.

In contemplating the history of this ill-fated monarch, and his favorite ministers, we are naturally struck with astonishment at a species of conduct, which one should hardly expect would be considered

sidered, even by an *English minister*, as *just*, or *necessary*. On the ground of justice it is inexplicable! we examine it on the ground of policy, and it is no less so! What, we are led to ask, could possibly induce the young men to *give*, or the king to *take* advice, the unavoidable result of which, all but themselves must have foreseen and predicted?

That men, holding places under the crown, should disregard the interests of the people, is a case too common to excite our admiration: But had they no regard for the interest of the monarch, on whose smiles they lived? Alas! the history of the world has amply proved, that courtiers have in general as little real attachment to the king, as they have to the people. But if the ministers of Rehoboam were like those of other kings', they were at least *attached to their places*; they could not
but

but know that *their* prosperity was inseparably connected with the prosperity of the king, and *that in his ruin their own* would be necessarily involved ; and therefore we have every reason to believe, that the advice they gave him was, *in their judgments*, the best and most effectual to secure his throne, and preserve inviolable his *sacred prerogative*. They were *young men*, it is true, and therefore destitute of experience ; but we are not therefore to conclude that they were without understanding ; nay, it is most probable that some of them were men of parts, and might be as capable of making an elegant speech, of considerable length, and blinding the understanding of their hearers, as any of our modern ministers : Why then did they not foresee what perhaps had been, by persons of less information and less ability than themselves, both foreseen and foretold ?

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The solution of all these difficulties is given in the last clause of the text “ the cause was from the Lord.” The event took place by the determination of the Most High.

On reading this, we wonder no longer at the *folly* and *obstinacy* of the *monarch*; or the total failure both of *principle* and *policy* in the councils of his *ministers*; but discern a necessary connection between the appointed event, and the steps which led to it. Here our subject becomes somewhat serious, and suggests a few reflections, with which we shall conclude.

As on the one hand, when the Supreme Disposer of Events is pleased to “ raise a nation, for such time as to his wisdom seemeth good, to an high pitch of prosperity and glory,” the means which in his
pro-

providence he makes use of, are *the virtues infused into great men.**

So on the other hand, when it pleases the great Governor of the Universe, either totally to destroy, or for a time to humble the pride of a haughty and overbearing nation, the means by which he is generally pleased to effect his purpose, is the withholding wisdom from those who govern it, and “ turning their councils,” like that of Ahitophel, “ into foolishness.”

When such is the case, in vain we wonder at their folly, and in vain expect that even *experience itself* will make them *wiser*.

Whenever, therefore, we see a government persevering in measures, the folly and

* *Vide* the inscription on the monument of lord Chat-ham, in the Guildhall, London.

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injustice

injustice of which are obvious to all who are not warped by *interest*, or blinded by *prejudice*; when we behold them “un-
 “taught by trial, unconvinced by proof,” increase in obstinacy as their credit declines; and experience, while it makes some men wise, only serving to render *them* more *desperate*: when we see them *wanton*ly increasing the burthens of an *oppressed* people, deaf to all their peaceable and well-founded complaints; and adding, as in the case before us, *insult* to oppression, what can we conclude, but that the Almighty, having in justice decreed their *destruction*, permits their *infatuation*, as the means that must lead infallibly to it.



THE END.

